

Council Meeting Summary

Monday, May 15, 2006

Council Members in attendance:

Elaine Brown - Michigan Food and Farming Systems, Janet Cushman - MI Department of Human Services, Giancarlo Guzman - Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health, Mike Hamm - Michigan State University, Mattie Jordan-Woods – Northside Association for Community Development, Cheryl Kobernik – North Star Organics, Jane Marshall - Food Bank Council of Michigan, JoAnn Merrick – MI Department of Environmental Quality, Justin Rashid - American Spoon Foods, Inc., Dan Reeves - Associated Food Dealers of Michigan, Todd Regis - United Food & Commercial Workers Local 951, Todd Wickstrom - Heritage Foods USA, Carol Wolenberg – MI Department of Education, and Wayne Wood – MI Farm Bureau.

Other attendees:

Chris Bedford – Sweetwater Local Foods Market, Alethia Carr – MI Department of Community Health, Joe Colyn – Originz Consulting, Michael DiRamio – Food System Economic Partnership, Kathy Fedder – MI Department of Agriculture, Marla Moss - Michigan Department of Education, Mike Score – Food System Economic Partnership, and Denise Yockey – Michigan Apple Committee.

Michigan Department of Agriculture Deputy Director Keith Creagh was unable to attend the meeting, so MFPC Executive Coordinator Kristin Brooks ran the meeting.

Ms. Brooks began the meeting with a brief review of voting procedures, and then moved directly into discussing and voting on the ten proposed recommendations before the council. Task Forces A, B, C and D each had recommendations for Council consideration. Task force chairs presented each recommendation and Ms. Brooks initiated discussion and voting.

The following is a summary of the discussion and voting process for each recommendation. The recommendations, as included below, reflect the final language that was passed by Council members.

Discussion of Recommendations:

Recommendation C3: Increase the purchase of Michigan-produced foods by Michigan schools for service to students.

Council Members discussed how much increasing the amount of money available per meal per student would benefit Michigan producers given the extra money was spent on Michigan food purchases. This information is not yet known, but the question, if investigated, could yield interesting and helpful results for farm to school efforts in the state.

✓The recommendation was passed, with no amendments, with no objections.

Recommendation C4: Provide support for developing and improving farmers' markets in Michigan.

At the beginning of the discussion, a Council Member expressed concern over specifically mentioning organizations/institutions as potential beneficiaries in the recommendations. The Council Member argued that it was happening too frequently in the recommendations and that the potential benefits should be structured more generally.

In relation to Rec. C4, the Council discussed whether or not specific mention should be made of Eastern Market in this recommendation, and ultimately decided that the recommendation should be for a broad program to develop and improve existing markets, with a decision to be made by the state (perhaps through a competitive process) as to which farmers' markets are most appropriate for piloting the program. The Council agreed on an amendment deleting mention of Eastern Market from the recommendation and broadening the recommendation.

✓The recommendation was passed, with amendments, with no objections.

Recommendation D3: Increase promotion and education around Michigan's diverse agricultural industry and its importance to both the state's overall economy and to residents' quality of life.

No discussion.

✓The recommendation was passed, with no amendments, with no objections.

Recommendation D4: Encourage and support new opportunities for niche and value-added markets.

There was some discussion of the role of the state in supporting entrepreneurs, and recognition of the fact that the state cannot create entrepreneurs – it can only attempt to create an environment supportive of entrepreneurs. The council agreed to an amendment to *support*, rather than *develop* new market opportunities. It was also recognized that the recommendation should not exclude traditional commodity crops such as apples.

✓The recommendation was passed, with amendments, with no objections.

Recommendation D5: Expand and stabilize the farm workforce.

No discussion.

✓The recommendation was passed, with no amendment, with no objections.

Recommendation A3: Improve access to fresh and healthy foods by increasing the number of supermarkets and fresh food retail outlets that serve urban low-income populations.

The Council discussed the fact that food stamp issuance is a complicated issue. If issuance is changed according to this recommendation, there will be a difficult transition period for program administrators and clients, but ultimately the change will benefit clients and help to stimulate inner-city economies and grocery store development. The Council also emphasized that changing food stamp distribution is only one of many things that the state can and should do to assist grocery store developers. The Council agreed on an amendment to remove the reference to feasibility studies.

✓The recommendation was passed, with amendments, with one objection from Janet Cushman of DHS.

Recommendation A4: Encourage entrepreneurs in agri-food businesses, and support the networks that help them to be successful.

The Council decided that the recommendation should not focus exclusively on the MSU Product Center, and should encourage state partnership with other universities and programs. The Council agreed on an amendment to broaden the recommendation to include other partners as service providers to entrepreneurs.

✓The recommendation was passed, with amendments, with no objections.

Recommendation B8: Increase participation in the Food Assistance Program.

A council member requested that language be added to specifically include persons with limited English proficiency. A council member objected to the implementation strategy that DHS should expand simplified reporting for certain people, but the council member acknowledged that this implementation strategy would remain in the recommendation.

✓The recommendation was passed, with amendments, with no objections.

Recommendation B9: Increase access to and support for emergency food resources.

No discussion.

✓The recommendation was passed, with no amendments, with no objections.

Recommendation B10: Incorporate nutrition education and promotion as a part of all food assistance programs.

No discussion.

✓The recommendation was passed, with no amendments, with no objections.

The ten recommendations discussed and passed in this meeting are in addition to the seven recommendations passed in earlier meetings. The Council has passed seventeen recommendations to date.

Ms. Brooks opened the meeting to public comment. There were no public comments.

The next Michigan Food Policy Council meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 7, 2006, 1:00 - 3:30pm, Constitution Hall